



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship

Canadian Grand Prix

Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

TRACKSIDE INTERVIEWS (conducted by Will Buxton)

Q: Sixth career position, here in Montreal, 12,000 friends to celebrate with. That was an exceptional lap.

Lewis HAMILTON: What's up Montreal? How are you guys doing? I'm so happy! Thank you so much for coming out here every year, you guys are the ones who all make this grand prix as special as it is for us. Thank you so much. Montreal's been good to me over the years; it was a close battle with the Ferraris, they were so quick. They've been quick all year, but I was gunning, I was pushing -- I've got great support out here and I just wanted to give them a good lap.

Q: The first flyer in Q3 was exceptional. The second almost defied belief. What a lap!

LH: It was a sexy lap! It was a great lap. I can't believe it came together so well -- the first section was fantastic and I just managed to be a little bit up on each one. The team did a fantastic job to learn from our mistakes in the last race and really build up for this race, so I owe it all to them. To everyone back at the factory, a big thank you.

Q: Seb, it was close man, it was so close, particularly on that first run. We've got the Montreal Ferrari Fan Club there. Yeah it's front row, but can you win it tomorrow? Have you got the pace?

Sebastian VETTEL: I think we have. I'm not so happy with the last run I had in qualy; I'd like to repeat the second run, just find a little bit. I probably pushed a bit too hard, lost a little bit in sector two, and then I tried a little bit of catch-up. Not ketchup to eat, catching up the lap times! It was a good qualifying session, though, getting better at the end. At the beginning I was struggling to find a rhythm. Great atmosphere, people cheering, free practice they're on it, so it's really great to be here.

Q: And no seagulls this year, just this man to get in your way.

SV: Yeah, I mean, the seagulls were in Turn One last year, so I'm pretty sure we should be fine.

Q: Valtteri, this is a track that's always suited you. Once again, another phenomenal job – talk me through your qualifying.

Valtteri BOTTAS: It was close here, as I expected. Lewis had a mega run today. For me, on the second run I tried to go faster, but I went deep into Turn Ten [unclear]. So well done to Lewis, as I said

Q: Lewis, today you equalled your great hero Ayrton Senna to go second of all-time in pole positions. The Senna family wanted to give you something to congratulate you on equalling Ayrton's record. It's not a replica, it's race-worn. From your hero, to you. Lewis, you've had a few emotions in Formula One. How does that one rank?

LH: I'm shaking. I'm speechless. Ayrton... I know for many of you he was your favourite driver. It was the same for me – he was the one who inspired me to be where I am today. To match him, and to receive this, is the greatest honour. A big, big thank you to the Senna family, and to everyone here. God bless you all. Thank you.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Many congratulations, Lewis. An inspired drive today, and obviously a very special moment with this amazing memento you've been given. A tremendous battle continues, with you and Sebastian clearly pushing each other right to the limit. Perhaps you'd like to tell us a little bit about that lap in detail and where you found it from.

LH: We've obviously been working very hard over the past two weeks to try and rectify the issues we had with the car. Needless to tell you, the guys worked harder than ever and did an amazing job to firstly understand where we went wrong and then figure out how we can progress forwards. I'm really so grateful for all the hard work back in the factory. We've known all weekend that it was going to be really close, but Ferrari really did seem like they had the upper hand. Being as it is a street circuit, being that there are risk factors in terms of how you push on your lap, you always save your best for last. We've been building up, honestly... We thought they might have another power mode to step up, Seb had been very very strong. Yeah, and I just went out and tried to do very consistent runs, and just build upon each lap, each time I went out, but knowing there are a few places to improve on. Working the ultrasoft tyre for the first lap is not easy, and obviously that's been an issue in the past and it's something I've been working very hard to make sure I fully understood and how to capitalise on the use of the tyre. Today was the day that I needed to do that – I knew that number 65 was there in the waiting, I knew that Montreal has been a beautiful place and a beautiful home for me in the many years since my first win here. So I was like 'if I'm going to get a pole, get that special pole, if anywhere it's going to be here. Of course, you go into your last lap and you can't imagine it. You can only hope and imagine it's going to go well, but often it doesn't. The lap just started perfectly on the exit of the last corner; I built it on the foundations I had already set on the previous lap. Very smooth, no mistakes, just a little bit up everywhere. And then the last part was in the last corner, which has always been a strength of mine throughout my time here. And an incredible reception from the fans, so a big thank you to them. For the Senna family to send me this... I don't actually own any of Ayrton's artefacts, anything from him, so this is the most special thing I have, above and beyond all my trophies and everything. A big, big thank you – I'm honoured to be honoured by that family.

Q: And only three behind the all-time record, might be achievable in the near future. Very well done. Well, in any great duel there is always the other side of the story, Sebastian. Two great champions pushing each other to the limit at the moment. It was four one thousandths between you after that first run, but were you dismayed by the lap time he pulled out?

SV: Well I didn't know at that point, I was still on my lap but I knew I had to improve, even just by five thousandths. First of all, congrats to him, it's a massive achievement, so he was the better man today. I'm not entirely happy. We had a bit of a different run in in qualifying, which was fine and it just got better and better and for the last run I thought OK, we can step it up and I should be able to find a little bit of time but I lost the car a bit in Turn 2, I was on the back foot already, losing two tenths out of the second corner and then I knew I had to catch up which I did until the end of the lap but just enough to do the same time as before so not entirely clean. I would have loved to get a better lap at the end. But that's how it is but nevertheless I think the car is very good. I was happy this morning, I was happy this afternoon and it should be very good in the race so looking forward to tomorrow.

Q: Valtteri, this has always been a very strong track for you. Were you surprised by the pace Lewis was able to pull out of the car today? And thoughts on the race for tomorrow because it looked to me on the long runs yesterday that you had pretty low degradation on the tyres. You looked very strong yesterday in the long runs.

VB: Yeah, first of all, big congrats to Lewis for his 65th pole position. It's a great achievement matching Senna, so well done. He had a mega-lap today. I was really trying hard. It was a tricky day for me, especially Practice Three with the balance of the car. It really hasn't happy at all but a lot better for qualifying. Q1, Q2 felt good but in Q3, when I came down to getting those last hundredths and tenths and pushing harder, the car became unstable again and not so easy to predict. I struggled more with the car today than Lewis did and couldn't get a lap together. But yeah, long runs seemed OK. Again, it's going to be close with Ferrari I think, so I felt good in the car on the long runs and it's all about tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Mike Doodson – Honorary) Lewis, Ayrton himself always placed more importance on pole positions than he did on race wins. What is your policy in that area?

LH: I can understand that because obviously it makes the Sunday often easier. Even though it's still difficult it gives you the best possible opportunity and the optimum position to start the race. So, I can agree with that, and obviously I equalled Ayrton in race wins a while ago so this had been focus. Literally as a kid, I'd come home and, like, one day if I'm really lucky and I can get to Formula One, I'd want emulate Ayrton. The fact I've now reached him in that area... I just can't believe it. Honestly, I can't believe it. I remember coming home from school and putting on the videotape of Ayrton, so it's really strange to think that now I'm here and level in poles. And being that it is the most difficult season, I would say, in my career, racing against these two great drivers, and Kimi, and having us so close, really, then pushes us all to the limit and relies on us all being perfect. And, of course, we can't always be perfect. Today I got as close as I could get.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) For Lewis. I can imagine this is far better getting his helmet near the people, near the audience, in the public than in the press conference?

LH: Sure, I've really grown a lot with the fans here. There's a lot of Ferrari fans here, as there are around the world – but there's a lot of Team LH fans here that have really grown with me from my first pole position, my first win in 2007. So, there's been a lot of growth over those years and I really feel welcomed in Canada when I come. Not only here but just, when I go to Toronto, for example. It's a place I love. I really do love this track, and when you're able to pull out a lap like that, it just cements the love that you have for it again. And to receive that in front of the crowd, it's a huge, huge fillip. Sold out crowd I think today – they always turn out in their thousands and really, really create the atmosphere. As I was driving towards them, outside the car, I could feel the roar. I can feel it when I do the out-

lap, when I do the in-lap, when I've finished the lap, I can see them in the corner of my eye. They're just out-and-out sports fans. I think they just have an appreciation for competition.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer.com) Lewis, you said that was a near-perfect lap. Obviously 65 is a lot of pole positions – but is this one of your best, or maybe even your best?

LH: If I'm really honest it's really hard to remember every single pole. If I'm really honest... they've all been special and unique in their own way. I think being that it's hard to remember them, it also feels like it's the first time. Honestly, coming across that line, almost holding your breathe, hoping, fingers crossed, waiting, knowing that Sebastian was still on a lap, Valtteri was still on a lap, not sure. It was a good lap but you don't want to get your hopes too much up because you'll be disappointed if they do a better lap – but in the intensity of the moment, I don't really recall having as intense a moment, in terms of this intense battle that we're having I would like to think that it is one of the best, yeah. And being that it is equalling Ayrton as well, makes it a little bit more special.

Q: (Bill Beacon – Canadian Press) A question for Lewis and Sebastian. Given that the two of you are so close in every way this year, what sort of race are you expecting tomorrow? Is it one of those races that's going to go down to the last lap?

LH: I believe it will, being that we are so close. Ferrari have great single lap pace but very, very strong always, as they have shown in the races. I anticipate tomorrow... it was a close battle last year between us and I can only imagine that tomorrow it's going to be pushing all the way to the end. It's definitely going to be a good one. I'm excited about it.

SV: I expect a close race! I think it has been very close in every race so far. Maybe Monaco they were struggling a bit more in terms of pace but everywhere else we went it's unfair to say that one was quicker than the other. I think we were in the same tenth in race pace. That's great. Not so easy to overtake if you are that close, no matter where you go, but we'll see. It will be a long race tomorrow. Canada is always nice, so looking forward to tomorrow.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Lewis, three more pole positions and you will equal the record. Will that be a similar emotion, because it seems that the 65 of Senna stands out more than the 68 of Michael?

LH: I haven't got to the 68 of Michael so I can't really say. I can't really look that far ahead at the moment. I just have to be really grateful and appreciate this moment, because it was, as I said, Ayrton was the guy that I noticed at the beginning... I think it was the colour of the helmet. That's what kids notice, the colours, and then you kind of get hooked – 'that's my driver'. But of course a big fan of Michael's and to think that I am that close to his incredible record it would be... I'm going to be racing for a while so I plan on getting there. That would be an honour in itself at that moment but that's all ifs and buts and whens and I have to appreciate this moment. You never know when it's your last day.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, how would you rate your own chances tomorrow for winning the race, if these two are only concentrating on each other?

VB: For sure starting third you have all the chances. It's a long race tomorrow and we are all in the first few rows going into the race so try and win it. For us, as a team, it would be best to try and get a 1-2 but of course as a driver you always go for the best and try to win it and there is a chance. But it's going to be a long race, so we'll see.

LH: Heikki, do you have questions for the non-Finnish drivers? I'm actually part-Finnish, I spend a lot of time with Finnish people. He [Seb] has a home in Finland!

Q: (Jeff Pappone – Inside Track) It's not a Senna helmet, but last month there was a set of stamps unveiled in Canada to mark the 50th anniversary of this race featuring Jackie Stewart, Gilles Villeneuve, Aytron Senna, Michael Schumacher and yourself. I just want to know how you feel about that? Have you seen the stamp and what's your feeling about included among those drivers as one of the drivers of the decades of this race?

LH: I have seen the stamp. I've got the stamp. I posted it the other day...

SV: To who?

LH: No, no, I posted it on Instagram! That's actually a good idea! I should post it to someone! Yeah, I'm honoured to be amongst those great drivers, those previous legends. I posted an image on Instagram, of an image that had the other drivers on there, that showed me amongst them. Ultimately just very proud of... it wouldn't be possible without the all the hard work of my family. My dad standing here for the time when I won my first grand prix here, all the work that went in before that which no one really gets to see. Right now all the stuff you see is the tip of the iceberg and no one know how big an ice berg is and no one knows how hard we work to get where we are today, so I really owe it to a lot of people who are behind me. I'm proud that I can put the Hamilton name there and if today is my last day on the Earth then the Hamilton name will remain in the sport forever and that's something we can be proud of.

Q: (Ralph Woodall – L'Equipe) Seb, the two Ferraris were very quick during practice. How do you explain the bit of struggle you had during qualification?

SV: I don't know what happened to Kimi. I was quite busy in Q3, doing three runs, so I didn't see much and I didn't know what times Lewis was doing until qualifying was over. I don't know, I think we always expect Mercedes to be quick, especially in the last segment. It's true that maybe I didn't get the best lap, but I think Lewis did just a better job today and got a really, really good lap. I don't know, maybe Kimi struggled with the car but otherwise we were fairly close all weekend.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Seb, about the three runs in Q3: was that meant from the beginning and is it here more important to have an extra run in Q3 than other circuits?

SV: No, not really but we spoke about it before obviously and then made the call. I was quite confident at the time to go with the first lap. Before, the session were a bit mixed, you saw that the lap times were getting better and better and when we made the call then I didn't run again in Q2 and the others put in the fastest lap on their first lap, so I was pretty confident we made the right call.

Q: (Chris Medland – Racer.com) Lewis, you referenced the fight with Ferrari, how much is this tight battle pushing you to improve yourself and perform at your very best? And to Seb and Valtteri how much more being in the fight for pole positions and wins at every race, does it produce your best?

LH: It's a good question. I would say my opinion is that it is a little bit more so for us because we are having a car that is not working everywhere. It's a great car but it's a trickier car to set up than the cars I've had in the past. It appears from the outside that the Ferrari is easier – while they are working hard – it works everywhere it seems. If we are staying level and we are up and down all the time, for sure it puts a lot of emphasis on us pulling together more than ever and as a team we are closer and more united than we have ever been. Utilising every engineer to the absolute max and utilising everyone's abilities as a team. In the five years I have been with this team I've never seen such great teamwork and communication. We are all just talking more than we have ever done. It's

great today to be able to say the fruits of that hard work. It's not just chatting for nothing. It's going to continue to be a tough, tough, tough race with the Ferraris, because they are so strong but today we have shown we can have an answer if we put the work in.

SV: I'm not sure I remember the question! I think it's always great if you step into the car knowing you can have a great weekend. I've always been very fortunate so far in my career that I have had very, very good years but I'm sure if you speak to the other half of the grid they are longing to be there, longing to have the chance, but for sure it's more enjoyable when you race for trophies – and maybe helmets as well!

VB: I think you are always trying to [find new limits] especially now being Lewis' team-mate and fighting with Seb and Kimi, for sure you are always trying to find new limits, and you are. You can improve as long as you want to. That is exciting but today was a tricky day for me. I didn't get everything... I wasn't so comfortable with the car and that's why I was behind but tomorrow is a new day.

Ends